

A Socialist ACTION

All out
on 11
February

With the
miners

against
the Tories

'I CAN tell the miners in Yorkshire and South Wales and Scotland that there will be no betrayal by this union. There will be no selling down the river of my members.' This was Arthur Scargill's response to Tory hopes for unconditional surrender by the NUM.

Scargill was not speaking for himself alone. In the coalfields, after 47 weeks, the miners are still determined, as Derek France of Silverwood put it, to 'walk back with our heads held high'. This determination has forced the Tories to draw back from Thatcher's blood-lust last week.

The fall in the pound, the rising interest rates, the panic in the stock market which wiped £4 billion off share values on Monday underline the fact that the Tories are not as strong or as confident as they pretend. They have not solved the problems of the British ruling class. They have not broken the working class.

The weakness of the City of London reflects the continuing strength of

the labour movement. This is the context in which the talks with the NCB take place. The stakes in the talks are every bit as high now as they were at the beginning of the strike, and if the Tories over-reach themselves they could pay a heavy price.

There will be no blank cheques for the NCB on pit closures. There must be a total amnesty for the 600 miners victimised during the strike. The miners' fight is still a fight for the whole working class.

Now more than ever is the time to stand with the miners, and to give the lie to the claims that the miners stand alone and isolated. The slogan for the left in the movement now must be *'with the miners all the way'*.



Socialist ACTION

Two choices

THE DAILY MIRROR, self-appointed supporter of the Labour Party, scourge of the Labour left, and frequently mouthpiece of Neil Kinnock, launched a bitter attack on Arthur Scargill in its front page on Monday.

While happily proclaiming that the miners' strike was lost — something not so clear to over 60 per cent of miners still on strike, nor to the Tories who are treading a good deal more cautiously — it declared that 'Mr Scargill has stabbed himself in the back. No one did it to him'. It was not Neil Kinnock. It was not the TUC. 'Commonsense has won through', the *Mirror* assures us.

As is often the case with *Mirror* pronouncements on the labour movement the reverse is the truth. After 11 months of struggle the NUM executive goes into the talks with over 60 per cent of its membership still on strike, and still supporting Arthur Scargill.

It is not Scargill who is out of line with the membership. It is those who have not defended their members' jobs. Not since AJ Cook has there been a trade union leader with such a record of determined leadership, and principled refusal to sell the membership short.

City

Scargill could have accepted the MacGregor plan. He could have called in the TUC general council to get him off the hook after a token resistance. He did not. The miners' refusal to capitulate in the face of the most ferocious assault on any trade union since World War II has produced a major change in the British labour movement.

In the last year the strike has become a focus for every strand of resistance to the attacks of the Tories — for blacks, women, Greenham, and the whole labour and trade union left. As a result, the Tories have been forced to back off from a whole series of attacks on the working class: on the docks, on rail, and in Liverpool.

The left in the movement has strengthened and clarified in the course of the miners' strike — and this is a material factor in the current talks. Had Scargill accepted the advice of Kinnock, Willis, Basnett, et al, the massacre of mining jobs would now be well under way, and the Tories would be free to turn their attention to other sectors. In that very real sense the miners have fought for the whole working class, and continue to do so.

Those who do not stand with the miners are betraying the whole working class. What is involved in the labour movement today, and will continue to be involved, is a division between those who stand on the class struggle and those who don't.

The left which has emerged in the course of the miners' strike is a product of that divide. It runs from top to bottom of the movement, and its leadership around Benn, Scargill and Livingstone has stood on the class struggle side of that divide.

The treachery of Kinnock, Willis, et al, has shown that to deal an effective blow to Thatcher, it is necessary to take the class struggle methods deep into the labour movement itself, and deal with the sabotage of the right. For that, the left must strengthen itself programmatically, and organise across the movement.

But right now, there are two choices. One is to stand back and take ones distance from the strike. The other is to stand with the miners and fight, to be with the struggle, whatever the outcome. At this point in the strike the left must do all it can to strengthen the NUM in the talks. The task for the left is still BACK THE MINERS!

Editor: ALAN FREEMAN
Published weekly except two weeks in August and the last week of December.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent Socialist Action's views. These are expressed in editorials.
Send all correspondence regarding subscriptions, sales and receipts to Socialist Action Distribution, 328 Upper Street London N1 2XP. (Tel: 01-359 8180)
Send all material for publication (including advertising) to Socialist Action Editorial at the same address.
We regret that due to the high cost of postage we cannot return or acknowledge unsolicited copy or photographs unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

Class against class

THE TALKS between the NUM and the NCB have produced the predictable and sickening response from the labour leaders. Their pleas to Thatcher for 'generosity' to allow an 'honourable settlement' serve to cover up the real issues involved. The Tories are not interested in an 'honourable settlement'.

They are interested only in taking the next steps forward in their plans for the coal industry. Kinnock and Willis are no doubt pleased to win the praise of the media for their 'sensible and moderate' stand, but it is clear that this is merely a tactical move by the ruling class to divide the labour movement against the NUM.

The Tories know that if a leadership which fights can be removed, a leadership which doesn't will be easy meat. They have not lost sight of their objective.

The hit list of 20 pits and 20,000 jobs has been resurrected, and the City of London's financial experts are once again looking towards the eventual privatisation of the profitable parts of the coal industry. The £5 billion of public money that the Tories have spent in trying to defeat the miners is seen by the City as a good investment for private capital — provided that the miners are defeated.

Multi-nationals such as Powell Duffryn and Rio Tinto are keenly interested in a slimmed down coal industry based on the so-called super-pits of the east Midlands, where plenty of money has been available to help the working miners' committees.

Their aim is a worldwide coal market, with the British industry as one component of their financial empires. The restructuring that they envisage for coal would mean the closures of up to half of the pits in Britain, and huge imports from their pits in South Africa and Australia. A key step towards that will be making the coal industry in Britain more competitive.

Change

This has been the core of the MacGregor plan. The aim, set out by MacGregor's predecessor in 1983, of making the coal industry break even by 1987/8 would have meant at least 65,000 jobs lost. The NUM exposed secret NCB documents in 1982 showing that 75 pits were classified as 'short life', and that reductions in the workforce of 75,000 over four years was planned.

This is why the gutter press has been calling for Arthur Scargill's head. It is no surprise that this chorus of reaction is joined by 'socialist' millionaire Robert Maxwell. For it is not a matter of 'malice' on Thatcher's part, as Neil Kinnock claims, but of profits for the ruling class.

The Tories' plans go well beyond the carve-up of the coal industry. Privatisation of rail, docks and



public services all offer profitable areas of investment, and in all cases will also demand attacks on the unions in those industries.

The truth that politics is concentrated economics has been clearly demonstrated in the miners' strike. When the whole of the bosses media unite to claim in the words of the *Daily Mirror* 'A defeat for Scargill is also a defeat for the hard men (sic) of the

left, the Benns who dream of a workers triumph through a general strike' it is clear that their class interests are at stake.

And when they go on to claim, again in the *Daily Mirror*'s words, that 'a disaster for Mr Scargill is an open opportunity for the sensible left' we can be sure that it is not the interests of the labour movement that they are defending. They are preparing

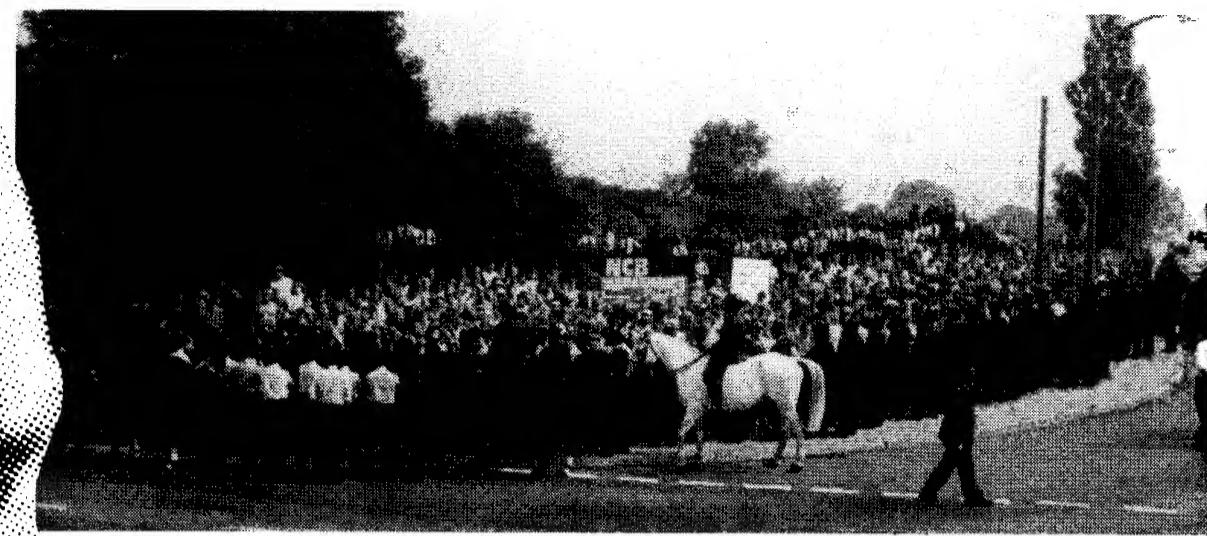
for another round of attacks and want the labour movement to have the weakest leadership possible, to prevent it using its strength in the interests of the working class.

The strength has not been broken. It is this that has made Thatcher drop her demand for preconditions, and which ensures that the Tories still have a long way to go before they can satisfy the demands of the City of London.

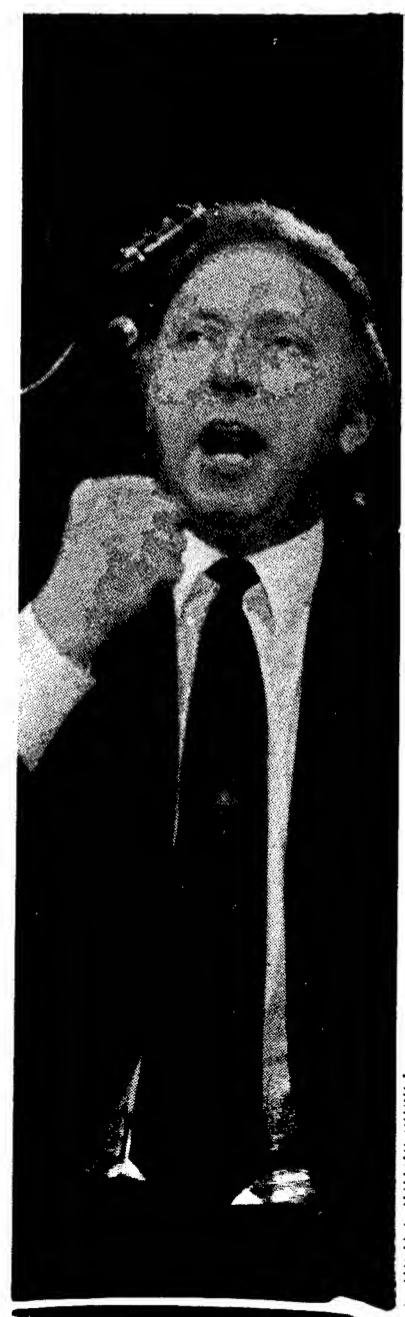
A PIECE OF THE ACTION



© CORMAC #84 1985



The enemy within



THE TALKS between the NUM and the coal board should not be treated as the end of the miners' strike. As Mark Twain commented when a newspaper published his obituary 'reports of my death are premature.'

Despite the difficulties that the strike now faces, there is no question of the NUM signing an unconditional surrender. Even after 11 months large sections of the union are not broken, and both the government and the NCB are well aware of it.

Thatcher's retreat from the demand that the NUM give a written undertaking to accept pit closures before talks could start is a clear indication that total victory is not on the agenda. In addition to the issue of uneconomic pits, there will be the question of the 600 miners who have been sacked in the course of the strike, whom the NCB has said will not be reinstated and whom the NUM will be determined to protect.

By Pat Hickey

Willis and Kinnock will continue to bleat that Thatcher 'contradicts the best conventions of the British character'. But the task facing the labour movement is not pleading for peace on behalf of the miners but mobilising the greatest possible support for the miners during the talks.

This means building for the 11 February day of action and for the 24 February demonstration in London, and continuing the solidarity work that has been built up in the last 11 months. Every section of the movement should now be strengthening their links with the miners.

Whatever the outcome of the talks — and agreement is by no means certain — these links will be crucial in the battle that will open up in the labour movement when the strike is over. The *Sunday Times* editorial put the matter in a nutshell, in a comment on Kinnock's attacks on Thatcher.

'The Labour leader's absurd public blusterings fool nobody, least of all the hard left activists they are designed to appease. They know, as does everybody else who thinks about politics, that Mr Kinnock owes the prime minister a debt of gratitude for being determined to defeat Mr Arthur Scargill clearly and decisively.'

If Mr Scargill were able to claim victory then Mr Kinnock's dif-

ficult task of turning his party into a credible alternative to the Tories would be gone for ever; Labour moderates and the Kinnock soft left would be swept aside as a triumphant Mr Scargill spread the message that militancy and mob action pay.'

Exactly so. From Kinnock through to Healey, and Willis through to Hammond, the Labour leadership has feared a victory for the miners much more than a victory for Thatcher. This is why the general council sabotages the decisions of TUC congress, and why they attack picket line violence.

Sabotage

They are as determined as ever to return to the new realist course adopted at the '83 congress. The idea that there can be a peaceful accommodation with the Tories remains the dominant one in the labour leadership.

The Labour Party and the trade union movement they seek to develop is one which is acceptable to the British ruling class. In the context of the present economic crisis such a course is disastrous for the labour movement. The Tory government will not reduce its attacks on the working class because Kinnock and Willis adopt a 'respectable' face, and avoid 'damaging and costly' disputes.

On the contrary, they will attack with increased ferocity. Rail and local government are the next in line for the Tory axe, and the welfare state will face even deeper cuts. The Tories are not out for accommodation with organised labour. They are out to destroy it.

The mobilisation of the forces of the state in the miners' strike should leave no doubt on that score. The saturation policing of the coal fields, the unprecedented legal attacks, and the attempts to split the NUM are methods which will be used again. They will not be stopped by the hypocrisy of Kinnock or the cowardice of Willis.

The miners' strike has clearly shown that, for the labour movement, these are the enemy within. Integral to the struggle against the Tories in the next period, will be the struggle against the labour traitors. The right will follow their treachery to the miners with an attack on the left in the movement. The drive towards business unionism, and a Labour Par-

ty that will be fit for a possible coalition with the SDP-Liberal Alliance will continue.

Such a course will demand the crushing of the left in the party and the unions. But those sections of the press and of the labour leadership who think that the miners are crushed and the left defeated are writing premature obituaries.

The miners' strike has hardened and clarified the left. There are few on the left now who have any illusions in Neil Kinnock and the dream ticket. Fewer still think that Willis and Basnett will be allies of the left against the hard right of Hammond and Duffy.

In the course of the strike it has become clear that the line of divide within the movement is between a leadership which will stand and fight and those whose policy is either outright treachery or shameful compromise. The leadership which has emerged in the course of the strike has become the focus for all sections of the oppressed in Britain.

FOCUS

The alliance which was seen at the Labour Party conference, between the miners, the black sections, women, Irish activists, and those who will fight to defend the cities is a formidable one. It will not be easily eliminated.

Throughout the country miners are joining the Labour Party with the clear intention of settling accounts with the labour traitors — with the intention of turning the Labour Party into a real party of Labour, a party that is a coalition of all sections of the oppressed.

The Tory assault on the working class in the next period will demonstrate to increasingly wide layers that only a policy of class struggle will defend the interests of the working class. The attack on the cities, on British Rail, on police funds, on the closed shop, will re-

mand a leadership in the labour movement which stands and fights.

The struggle against the enemy within, through forging an alliance of the oppressed, can produce such a leadership. The movement that has been thrown up by the miners' strike, in the support committees, the women's committees, the activities in the unions and the Labour Party, and the thousands of miners who have fought for the last eleven months and continue to fight, will be the vanguard of the coming struggle.

The task now for the left is to continue support for the NUM, to build the days of action and the 24 February demonstration, to keep the money coming in. It is also to deepen the political battle, to settle accounts with the enemy within.

In the unions this will mean campaigning between now and the union conferences to put the leadership's actions in the miners' strike on the agenda of conference, so that those who failed the miners can be called to account. It will mean fighting any move to take government money for ballots, and any move to accept the anti-union laws.

We must also prepare for the next TUC congress and the moves by the new realists even further to the right. In the Labour Party it will mean fighting for positive action, for reselection, against any witch-hunts, and for accountability.

Above all, it will mean fighting for mass action to defeat the attacks on local government, in support of all workers in struggle, and in defence of the closed shop. Against the backsliding of the right, it will mean fighting for action against the anti-union laws, and campaigning for the political funds.

Finally, it will mean that the left has to address itself to the task of developing a coherent programme in answer to that of the right, particularly on economic policy and defence — one which is capable of winning all sections of the working class and organised in time to meet the threat to democracy.

Nottingham: for a national union

THE RIGHT-WING leaders of the Nottinghamshire area of the National Union of Mineworkers are having a much rougher ride than they expected in forming a breakaway union.

They geared up their members for a short sharp break based on a huge disinformation campaign around the benefits of a split with the national union.

But now the NUM delegate conference has been delayed this has meant a pause for thought in many branches in the area.

In Moor Green and Lindley miners have voted to stay in the National union. At Pye Hill the branch has requested a speaker from the National executive.

This is a slap in the teeth to Colin Clarke, a member of the branch and Secretary of the National Working Miners Committee.

The South Notts strike committee have got the signatures of 10 per cent of the area membership on a pledge of allegiance to the National Union. Martin Bower reports for Socialist Action.

IN DECEMBER the right-wing leaders of the Nottinghamshire Area Council pushed their campaign to get rid of rule 30 through the branch meetings in the area on the basis of slanders against Arthur Scargill and the National Union and by telling the members that Rule 51, the disciplinary rule, would be used against our area after the strike was over.

In South Derbyshire the miners there voted to have a ballot on the proposed rule change. And in Leicester three out of the four pits in the area have voted for a split with the national union.

In each case the procedure for breaking away is the same. The right-wing want to delete rule 30 from their area constitution.

This rule says that where area policy and national

policy conflict, national policy should be sovereign.

The last thing the right-wing leaders in these three areas want their members, even their working members, to realise is the real implications of such a split in the union.

The National Union of Mineworkers was re-established as a national union ironically in Nottingham in 1944.

The constitution of the union agreed there is strongly defended by the National executive because it allowed both for a unified National union and for area autonomy in matters related to the particular conditions in each area.

Many of the working miners know that their union is strong because of its tradition of being able to negotiate on behalf of every miner.

They know that a break-away union of the three right-wing areas would have far less power to win concessions from the NCB than the National Union.

A split with the NUM therefore not only harms the 120,000 striking miners it even harms those who



Dennis Skinner at miners' rally

are working.

The response of the National Executive on 10 January was to propose expulsion of the entire Nottinghamshire area because of the disloyalty of their leaders.

A special delegate conference has yet to implement that expulsion. Those Nottinghamshire miners who want to stay within the National Union are using the breathing space to win the argument for maintaining allegiance to the National Union.

A leaflet has been distributed throughout the area calling on individuals to swear allegiance to the national union and join the 'National Union of Mineworkers, Nottingham Division'.

The leaflet points out that there has been no threat to use Rule 51 against Nottinghamshire miners who have not supported the strike, that this disciplinary rule was introduced by the Nottinghamshire area itself in August 1984 in order to bring the NUM rules up to date and put them in line with natural justice.

It goes on to make it clear that 'the National Union is not expelling Nottingham area but that the Nottinghamshire Council is intent on forming a breakaway organisation'.

It urges miners to remain with the National Union pointing out that the TUC and the Labour Party will not recognise the new organisation. The announcement by

The Observer this week that the NCB has been financing the Nottinghamshire area of the NUM to the tune of £1.5 million a year makes it crystal clear who is pulling the strings of Mr Link (Acting General Secretary) and Mr Prendergast, (Acting Treasurer) of the Nottinghamshire area.

'Business unionism' will have its foot in the door of the British trade unions if these scabs are not pulled up exceedingly sharply.

Solidarity tasks

If the talks between the NUM and the NCB continue this week it will be no reason for the solidarity movement to start to close up shop. Indeed the opposite is the case.

Because the Tory government and the NCB is piling the pressure on the miners public demonstrations of support become even more important.

The two key dates for the solidarity movement must be 11 February, when the Yorkshire and Humberside and the South East Regions of the TUC are calling for industrial action and the 24 February, when the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions has set a date for a national demonstration.

The price the labour movement is paying for the right-wing domination of the TUC is a high one. Not only the miners face harassment and victimisation for their struggles, but so also do all groups of workers who have taken 'secondary' or, more

precisely, 'solidarity' action in support of the NUM. The Tories hope to really make use of the Employment Acts.

By Valerie Coulter

The employers and the Tories are out for revenge on the militants, knowing that the Basnett, Kinnocks and Willis's will sit on their backsides and take no real action to protect the left.

In the docks, in the power stations and on the railways many rank and file militants have fought hard to win backing for the miners.

If the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions had lived up to its name on 12 January it would have called for a national industrial stoppage in support of the miners.

But, led by the Communist Party, it feared doing anything that would have to be called over the heads of the left-wing leaders of the trade unions such as Knapp, Buckton, Keys, Todd.

The best that the Communist Party has on offer, at such a crucial time for the strike, is regional days of action, regional industrial stoppages.

This was just the kind of timid call that came from the Rail Federation in response to a call from the Coalville workers for national industrial action against victimisation. That call was well supported.

But it's clear that more than regional action is needed to force this government-backed campaign against the miners to be knocked off course.

The Metropolitan District of NALGO is asking its members to strike on 11 February in London. In Yorkshire a similar call from NALGO is forthcoming.

Pressure needs to be placed on NALGO nationally to back that day. The same with the print unions, they have decided on action in London, pressure needs to be mounted for national action.

So also with the NUR, who will undoubtedly support the call on a regional basis, but again what about setting a national date?

The Campaign group have invited the Mineworkers Defence Committee and representative from the Regional TUC's to come together to build the 24 February national demonstration.

A 'Miners Support Group' is being formed, representative of all those in the solidarity movement, to build that demonstration. Ken Livingstone and Tony Benn are involved in the formation of that group.

The establishment of such a group registers something very important about the solidarity movement in this strike. The Labour party rank and file and the Campaign group in Parliament have stuck by the NUM for 11 long months — on the picket lines, on the street collections, in the Town Halls, in the fund raising concerts.

They have not buckled to the press vilification of the miners as the men of violence. They have stuck with the miners and broadened and deepened their support.

The solidarity movement continues to grow. Even since Christmas two new solidarity groups have been established in support of the miners — Lesbians Against Pit Closures and Writers and Media Workers Against Pit Closures.

The Campaign group's actions in the House of Commons demanding a debate on the strike caused Neil Kinnock considerable embarrassment and his denunciations — although the press lavished praise — did not gain the approval of Labour's NEC.

Thus the solidarity movement, led by the Labour left, still has considerable potential to mobilise support behind the NUM.

The campaign to make both the 11 February and the 24 massive displays of solidarity must begin now. For these two events everyone who can be brought out must be brought out.

Coal trains must roll say BR

THE CHAIRMAN of the British Rail Board told railworkers last week that unless coaltrains moved 600 jobs could be axed and this year's pay rise would go out of the window.

The BRB wants 'normal' working to be resumed by the deadline of 27 January. They are also threatening to sue the National Union of Railwaymen for its strike on 17 January under the 1984 Employment Act. MIKE COLLEY reports on the situations inside rail for Socialist Action.

The strike on 17 January was in protest at the board's bullying of NUR and ASLEF members who have refused to move coal throughout the miners' strike. It was a big success despite the attempts of the NUR executive to water down the action.

The confrontation between the board and the Rail Federation is likely to sharpen over the coming weeks as Knapp and Buckton are on record as saying they are not going to retreat from their policy of support for the NUM.

BR has legal grounds on two counts to take action against the rail unions, both for the 11-month long sympathetic action by railworkers and for the 17 January strike which was taken without a ballot, a requirement of the 1984 Trade Union Act.

But, as always, management has to weigh up the 'legality' of

their claims against the very real possibility of provoking all-out industrial action.

They don't want to risk facing a fighting alliance of miners and railworkers.

A great struggle is on within the rail industry. BR, through the Tory press and internal messages, is putting across its case that defence of the miners means railworkers jobs, that the freight traffic in coal will never come back to the railways.

Very naturally this worries people and the union leadership have been less than adequate in answering it.

But the railways continue to be the most efficient way in time and cost of moving coal. It is BR that is using the miners strike to carry out rationalisations and closures particularly in freight.

Railworkers have shown that they are willing to fight. The majority of the major freight depots carried out union policy on non movement of coal without a strong lead coming from union

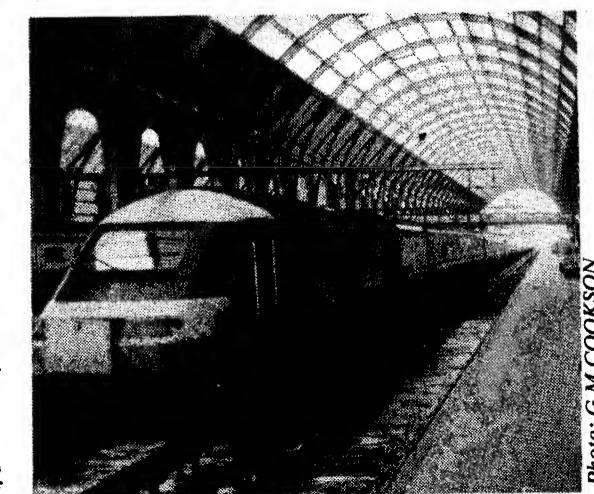


Photo: G M COOKSON

Mineworkers Defence Committee National Conference Solidarity with the NUM!

OCTAGON CENTRE

SHEFFIELD

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 9th

11am-5.30pm

DELEGATES: 2 per TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

1 per OTHER ORGANISATION

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

PETER HEATHFIELD BETTY HEATHFIELD
TONY BENN JOHN TOCHER PHIL HOLT

SPONSORS SO FAR INCLUDE:

CAMPAGN GROUP OF MPS, FIRE BRIGADES UNION,
BROAD LEFT ORGANISING COMMITTEE, LABOUR BRIEFING,
LESBIANS AND GAYS SUPPORT THE MINERS,
GREENHAM WOMEN FOR A MINERS' VICTORY

Accommodation, Credentials and Creche:
Ring 01-981 3289 or write to:
Mineworkers Defence Committee, c/o 31 Cranwich Rd N16

Photo: G M COOKSON

Back to work — on our terms

THE 'BACK TO work' movement in the coalfields has grown over the last two weeks. Press reports suggest that it is up to the levels in November when the bribe of a Christmas bonus was used to lure miners into work.

The figures the NCB has leaked to the press are 8847 for 1985 and 2900 for the last week. They claim that 77,000 miners are now working, 41 per cent of the total 187,000 miners inching close they argue to the 50 per cent when the NCB have said they will regard the strike as over.

As the latest issue of *The Miner* points out however these figures are grossly inflated. The main reason for this is that the Board always talks about those 'not at work'! This includes many men not at work for reasons of sickness. The figures for those working also include every member of staff. The NUM's figure is 120,000 miners still on strike after 11 months.

GLEN TURNER and COLIN TAPPER, from Oakdale colliery in South Wales, talked to Socialist Action about their view of the NCB's 'back to work' drive and the state of the strike.

What's your view of this new drive of the NCB to get miners back to work? The figures seem to be quite high even in Yorkshire and Scotland.

Glen: There are numbers going back but not to the degree the press is saying. You can't trust the board's figures.

They said seven miners went into St Johns, a pit in South Wales, but they were all with the union's agreement.

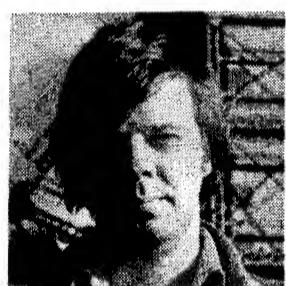
They're counting in these figures managers down to the lowest member of staff.

In South Wales the NCB claim 320 new faces this past week but our figures stand at 289. That's just one per cent of the membership by the way.

Glen: Yes even in Yorkshire it's 3000 out of 66,000, which is only 7 per cent not working. The point they want miners and the public to ignore is that after 11 months 120,000 miners are still on strike.

What's your view of the TUC's role in this strike?

Glen: It's no good the TUC going out and putting a call for a general strike because if nobody is going to respond it will not do the NUM any good ...



Glen Turner

Colin: The leadership of the TUC are gutless because they're not prepared to go into the workplaces and explain to their membership what this strike is all about.

There's a law within trade unionism that says that you don't cross picket lines and this law has to be respected.



The way you get a general strike is by winning support for the miners strike. We've got to get the collection going in the workplaces, put the case for coal and start to talk about spreading the action.

Glen: The reason that we are so solid in South Wales is because for four to five years we have been explaining to our membership what the Tory government plans for coal are.

We've educated the membership about the need to oppose the Tories.

It's the easiest thing in the trade union movement to send out a leaflet and let the dust settle. The trade union leaders should go into the power stations and argue the case for coal and get the workers to boycott oil and coal.

What action do you want to see now then?

Colin: We want to see the case for coal being put

everywhere. Support from other unions has been slow in coming and it must be stepped up.

I'd like to see 11 February become a national day of action but I don't think we can rely on the TUC.

Glen: Kevin Barron was right to say the NUM is in favour of talks with an open agenda. That's the position of the NEC and that's the position of the membership.

How do you think the NUM should respond to the threat of Notting-

hamshire and Derby to split the union?

Glen: What we're saying is that we'll reform the union in those areas. Those that want to stay in the union will be able to. Striking miners are picking their officials right now in those areas.

I was informed last night that a branch which included working miners said they wanted to stay in the National Union of Mineworkers.

They understand what strength 2,000 men would have in dealing with the NCB! Pits are threatened in Nottingham and Derbyshire.

What's your view of the stance that the NUM should adopt to negotiations at the present time?

Colin: We want to settle the strike. There's been a 'back to work' movement since the beginning of the strike provided we settle it on terms acceptable to the miners and their families.

In my view MacGregor is waiting for 50 per cent to go back to work so he can do in Britain what he did to American miners at Amex. There, when he'd got 50 per cent back, he then went and sacked the other 45 per cent.

They wouldn't support those locked out. That's the next move in Notts and Derbyshire and Leicester. To send letters out saying return to work or face the sack.

After he'd sacked half the workforce in the USA he then proceeded to cut wages, increase the hours and slacken up on safety conditions.

Glen: Kevin Barron was right to say the NUM is in favour of talks with an open agenda. That's the position of the NEC and that's the position of the membership.

Saturday 16 February

Socialist Action Miners Meeting

Penrhiceiwer Miners Institute,
Penrhiceiwer Cynon Valley,
South Wales.

Speakers invited so far include
Jacob Monetta, Dai Davies (South
Wales NUM exec), Kay Sutcliffe,
Helen John, Roy Butlin, Joe
Mohammed, People's Democracy.

Delegations are coming from Japan,
America, Australia, France, Germany,
Belgium.

Evening social and bar.

Registration £2.50 Miners and women from mining communities free.
For details of pre-arranged transport or registration ring 01-359-8371/2/3.
Hurry book now!

NUM in Sweden

FROM 7-24 December I visited 16 towns and cities in Sweden to raise funds for the National Union of Mineworkers.

The trip was sponsored by the Socialist Party, the Swedish section of the Fourth International.

The response that I received from the working people of Sweden to our struggle to save pits was tremendous.

My first visit was to the mining area of Kiruna, 200 miles inside the arctic circle. It's the biggest ore-producing mine in the world.

**By Martyn Bower,
Cotgrave NUM
(personal capacity)**

Here I talked with the leader of the underground miners' union and many other miners. They had already donated £30,000 to our strike.

Despite the fact that the news they received is biased against the NUM, feelings of international solidarity were very strong.

At Umea, in the North East of Sweden, I spoke to car workers and copper miners. I showed video tapes of the strike.

People there had never seen pictures of such violence by the British police before.

They did not know how our communities have organised to feed themselves over the last 11 months. It was all totally new to them.

Everyone wanted to know more after seeing the video and hearing me talk.

Time and time again Swedish trade unionists said that although the Swedish government was not as bad as Thatcher yet, they were looking to her for a lead.

In the steel towns of Borläng and Sanviken I explained what MacGregor did to steel workers in our country.

When they realised MacGregor had been a butcher for that industry as well as the mines the response was phenomenal.

As soon as I had finished speaking and the video had been shown the chair of the Börläng metalworkers wrote out a cheque for 6000 krona and said that when he had talked with his unions international committee he would double that amount.

Double

He also called on all the workers in his plant to give financial support to the miners.

In Stockholm I addressed the conference of the supporters of the Fourth International.

I ended my trip by meeting with shipyard workers in Malmö and Volvo carworkers in Stockholm. They urged me to carry on the fight as long as I had breath.

We organised innumerable street meetings in the towns I toured. The response of the ordinary people was amazing.

They queued up to give money to the British miners. The nation as a whole seemed to be willing the miners to win.

I returned to Britain on Christmas Eve knowing that with such international solidarity behind us the British miners had to continue the fight. We couldn't let our sisters and brothers abroad down.

Pit women call 9 March event

ON 9 MARCH in Chesterfield the Women Against Pit Closures movement will once again be demonstrating its support for the miners cause.

This will be a truly historic occasion as the date has been chosen because it is the nearest Saturday to 8 March, International Women's Day.

By choosing this date the Women Against Pit Closures movement will not only give another boost to the mining communities in their stand against Thatcher but they will also be giving the British labour movement the opportunity to show that the cause of women is the cause of labour.

The march through Chesterfield will end with an open air rally. Venues will be open all over the town for women to view exhibitions and listen to discussions led by women from Greenham Common, women in the trade unions and the Labour Party and women from pit villages.

One of the organising groups behind these suggestions is the Chesterfield Women's Action Committee, set up during the Tony



Women on the London region executive of the Labour Party are involved in the group and they plan another 'Here we Go' concert on 10 March at Piccadilly Theatre to raise funds.

Letters of invitation are being circulated to Spare Rib, Outwrite, Labour Party women's sections, women trade unionists, Labour Councillors and MP's.

tions that have taken place jointly between women from the mining communities and the Women's Peace movement. This demonstration gives us a chance to consolidate these links at a national level.

The women's group of the Mineworkers Defence Committee hopes to involve more women in the activities of the regional TUC's on 11 February. A leaflet is being produced urging women to picket

Neasden power station on the morning of the 11 February.

Now is the time not to slacken our support but to step it up.

The next meeting of the Mineworkers Defence Committee women's group takes place at County Hall at 6pm on Wednesday 30 January. All women welcome. For more information phone (Day) 359-8371, (Evening) 367-0021.

FOR ALMOST a year now the miners' strike has dominated the whole labour movement. In the Labour Party we have seen an increasing differentiation between the majority of party activists — prepared to stand alongside the miners in solidarity committees, on picket lines, and on demonstrations — and Neil Kinnock and his supporters whose emphasis on constitutionalism has led them deeper and deeper into the camp of the right.

During this struggle the leadership of Arthur Scargill has shown the left a real alternative to the parliamentary cretinism of Neil Kinnock and his ilk: an alternative which is, in the words of Scargill himself: 'a leadership that's prepared to stand up and fight'.

This divide has found its way into Labour's parliamentary benches in the form of those Campaign Group MPs who are increasingly speaking out in support of the miners, against the 'conventions of the House' and against the wishes of the Labour leadership.

This kind of action is Scargillism in parliament. The Campaign Group represents in embryo the sort of party leadership the left has fought for.

The Labour left must consolidate these lessons of the miners' strike, and plan a strategy to carry through these lessons in a consistent and thorough-going way, into all areas of struggle.

The white, middle-class, male, 'conservative' hold over the PLP has begun to be broken. Target Labour Government conference is an opportunity to begin this debate.



Labour left takes on Tories

Campaign Group

Scargillism in parliament

THURSDAY before last saw the Campaign Group members who'd been supporting the miners in the 10 month strike make a concerted effort to persuade the Speaker to grant a special debate on the issue, for the government to give time for a debate on the implications of the strike: the cost to public spending, the DHSS regulations, the role of the police, the safety of nuclear power stations, the likelihood of power cuts in the power stations, and its effect on the mining communities. The government refused to give time for this debate and the Speaker also rejected an application for a private member's debate made by Eric Heffer.

So Campaign Group members all stood together and refused to sit down; the Speaker accordingly suspended the session for a period of 20 minutes. When the session resumed we had a meeting and decided that Tony Benn would make a brief statement on our behalf, to the effect that we would continue demanding that such a debate take place.

Every day since then we've taken it in turns to raise different aspects of the miners' dispute. There have now been 22 separate applications made for a debate on the miners' strike. I believe we're getting somewhere.

Initially we were condemned by the

leader of the party and most of the shadow cabinet. But we'll persist until we get what we want.

The wide press coverage of our action represents a paranoia, a fear on the part of the establishment and the government, of the truth about the miners' strike getting out. It isn't anything to do with the cost of coal or with energy policy, it's everything to do with smashing the NUM, and smashing its leadership.

By Jeremy Corbyn

The government sees the Campaign Group as a focus for parliamentary support for the NUM. We don't do anything in support of the miners without first consulting the NUM — that's what solidarity is about.

The Campaign Group defines itself as a group in parliament determined that the party should fulfil a genuinely campaigning role, and recognises that defeat of the Tory government will be

brought about by a series of disputes, of which parliament is only part. It's struggle and activity outside parliament that is the key to that.

Each week at our meetings we discuss what we consider to be the main items on the agenda. At virtually every meeting since the strike started, we've discussed the dispute in the coalfields. We have ensured that all the Campaign Group members are on the picket lines. We also send speakers to rallies for the miners, and we've been prominent in picketing the power stations.

I personally have been involved in picketing a number of power stations because I think that at the moment that is the key to victory in this dispute: to stop the coal supplies coming in from abroad, to stop the oil movements, and to stop the switch-over to nuclear power.

We see our function as campaigning to carry out the decisions of the Labour Party conference. Remember the party conference only three months ago

voted very, very clearly — and by an enormous majority — for the NUM's position.

Frustration

Increasingly the Campaign Group is discussing longer-term strategy but its membership is fairly new to the House of Commons for the most part. It was established in 1982, out of frustration of the ability of the Tribune Group in parliament to actually seriously fight against the drift in party policy — such as the witchhunt, the register, the ditching of so many other aspects of Labour Party policy — as the election loomed.

In the new parliament in 1983 we've had a very great increase in membership. There are 38 members, a lot of whom are new. What we're now discussing is the way of building the issues and building the demands in the party at large. And we're supporting,

sponsoring and organising a series of rallies at each of the regional Labour Party conferences, most of which are taking place in March and April, as a way of promoting discussion and debate.

Quite simply the issue is this: that we have in power at the moment a Tory government trying to destroy the labour movement, ideologically trying to shift power to the right in this country. And we have a Labour Party which has a series of laudable policies on a whole range of issues. We require the mobilisation of the entire labour movement to get into power in order to carry out all those policies.

We're concerned about the talk that too often happens (based around the media) of retreat from those policies in order to get short-term electoral advantage. I'd put it quite simply this way: if the party obsesses itself with the entrails of opinion polls on any one issue, then what you start doing is jettisoning one policy after another in order to go for

Target Labour Government

Organising the fightback

DURING THE LAST 10 months support for the miners' strike has sorted many a sheep from a goat throughout the whole labour movement. While the vast majority of rank and file Labour Party activists have wholeheartedly thrown their weight behind the support committees and the picket lines, this has not been true of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

But the class struggle is even finding its way through the doors of Westminster. More and more divisions are opening up between Neil Kinnock and the 'legalists' on the one hand — all those whose mealy-mouthed support for the miners' 'just cause' does not extend to practical action in support of their strike, and who condemn even-handedly the use of violence without ever fingering the police and the Tory Party who have precipitated that violence — and MPs such as Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Eric Heffer and other members of the Campaign Group, who have found themselves increasingly at odds with the party leadership as the strike progressed.

By Carol Turner

There is no clearer example in recent years of the treacherous and anti-working class behaviour of the parliamentary leadership of Labour than the role played by Neil Kinnock and his front bench during the miners' strike. History has set this leadership a test — they have resoundingly failed it.

It is with that lesson in mind that party activists will be foregathering in Birmingham for the Target Labour Government conference on 16 February. When conference discusses the composition of the PLP and the policies of Labour one of the first questions on everyone's mind will be how to swap these scab leaders for those who are prepared to fight.

The conference aims to bring together all currents on the left of the party to discuss the policies and the personnel that will take Labour into the next general election. And that means fighting for a Labour government committed to defending the interests of the working class and oppressed in society. There is one simple way that TLG can demonstrate from the start which side it stands on: Arthur Scargill must be given pride of place on the conference platform.

Manifesto

The conference will discuss policy statements from TLG's working groups: on the economy, on social policy, on international policy, and on democratic rights and the law. There is no proposal to vote on these statements, but to start the discussion now of Labour's future policies. The active participation of all the groups within the party who are committed to defending the struggles of all sections of the working class against the Tory government is the best way to ensure that Labour's next manifesto and candidates reflect those interests.

The February conference is an opportunity to spread TLG's base, which presently remains predominantly in London. A successful fightback means a national fightback, across the constituencies and affiliated organisations up and down the country. Thatcher's offensive against the NUM is not her only one. In the months immediately before us she will take on the railworkers and local government to name but two.

1985 will continue to be a year of struggles against this vicious government, Target Labour Government is an opportunity for the left to gird its loins for the struggles which are to come.

TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Conference jointly organised by Target Labour Government & Labour Briefing

*What Type of Labour Government?

Ken Livingston, Merle Amory

Forward to Victory — Out With the Tories!

Tony Benn, Sharon Atkins, Frances Morrell, Bernie Grant

*Workshops on Economic Policy, Justice freedom &

the state, social policy, international & defence, accountability, positive action

SATURDAY 16th FEBRUARY

10am - 5pm

DIGBETH CIVIC HALL,

DIGBETH, BIRMINGHAM

Sponsors so far include: Black Sections Steering Committee, Labour Committee on Israel, Labour Against the Witch Hunt, Labour Commission on Immigration, National Defence Committee, Women Action Committee, Labour CND

*Circular — bookings in advance * Fund available on day * No wheelchair access

Buddhistes: 25 organisations delegate, 125 waged individuals, 500 unwaged

Available from David Jones, 808 Boundary Street, London N1 1ER

P & P Target Labour Government, 208 Boundary Street, London E1

There is already a wide debate within Labour's ranks about how to win the next election. The question pos-



Photo: GM COOKSON

absolutely determined to work flat-out for the election of a Labour government. We believe this can only be done if the party becomes a serious campaigning force on all the issues at all times.

The miners' dispute has seen the growth of miners' support committees, of women's support committees, of support from a lot of dispossessed and very poor people in the urban areas. In my own area, Islington, we have collected in excess of £70,000 for the mining communities. There's been some wonderful links created with South Wales, with Yorkshire, and with Nottingham. And now we're discussing how the mining communities can help us against rate-capping — it's that kind of solidarity that's growing up.

The Campaign Group tries to keep abreast of most of the major issues at its weekly meetings, but quite honestly which ever way you look and which ever issue you care to take, at the moment the miners' strike dominates — head, shoulders, and body above all those others. Because if we don't support the miners — if we wish the miners' strike away and ignore it as some people in the party seem to want to do — then what possibility is there of winning on rate-capping, on health cuts, on local government cuts, on transport policy, on nuclear energy, on nuclear weapons — a whole range of issues? All stand beside the miners' issue: that is the key, that is the crucial one.

The lessons I'd personally draw from the miners' strike for the Campaign Group is the importance and the power of a group of MPs sticking together and working seriously as a team. We've all consistently demanded the same thing — and from being denigrated by all and sundry, now virtually everyone seems to be saying it's time the miners' strike was debated. That, to us, is a small victory.

Control

The government is trying to shift power firmly to the right, we are trying to win power in order that we can carry out the policies of full employment and of public control of major industries and finance institutions. That's what the argument's about.

And you can only do that through action and through long-term campaign work. It can't be done merely by slick advertising methods or instant statements. The Campaign Group is

If talks are likely to start, we must continue and intensify the support for the miners, intensify the struggle outside parliament. As a union negotiator I know that a negotiator is only as good as the strength of the people outside the door, on the picket lines. In this critical week we must have an intensification of picketing, particularly at the power stations and at the docks.

The Campaign Group is writing to constituency parties and affiliates, asking people to intensify support for the miners, above all to raise the issue of sympathetic industrial action. We intend to see the miners right through to the victory which we will all share.

As I see it we're at a turning point in the Labour Party's history. If we are to win power in a future general election, it cannot be achieved if there is a shift to the right in the party, a shift to what I would call opinion poll politics. It can only be achieved if we campaign on the basic socialist issues, the issues of what a Labour government can and should achieve, and educate people on that.

If we don't do that, if we don't stand up against the Thatcher doctrine of 'Competition is the God', then the Labour Party will be missing the opportunity, missing the political argument it should be putting over. The political argument has to be that socialism is about control for benefit of the masses if the population — about providing homes, jobs, education and everything else — all the things the Thatcher government is attacking.

If we retreat in front of Thatcher's onslaught, Thatcher's attack, people won't look to us as an alternative they will see us as an irrelevance — a party that doesn't bother to fight when the onslaught is at its worst.

the mythical middle-ground in politics.

The Campaign Group is trying to explain to people that in order for Labour to win power through a future general election, then it means the lessons of the miners' dispute, the lessons of the health workers' dispute, the lessons about rate-capping, have to be very firmly put across to the public as a whole.

Control

The government is trying to shift power firmly to the right, we are trying to win power in order that we can carry out the policies of full employment and of public control of major industries and finance institutions. That's what the argument's about.

And you can only do that through action and through long-term campaign work. It can't be done merely by slick advertising methods or instant statements. The Campaign Group is

IN EARLY December the well-known Marxist economist ERNEST MANDEL visited Nicaragua at the invitation of the Nicaraguan Reform Research and Study Centre, under the Ministry for Development and Agrarian Reform. He had many discussions with officials responsible for sectors of the economy, for training Nicaraguan government cadres and with leaders of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

Besides giving several lectures to teachers at the Central American University, Mandel also gave a public talk entitled 'The World Crisis of Capitalism', sponsored by the Nicaraguan Association for the Social Sciences. Several hundred people attended the talk, which was announced the day before in the daily *Nuevo Diario*.

On his return from Nicaragua, Ernest Mandel was interviewed by *La Gauche* — the French-language paper of the Belgian section of the Fourth International. The interview is of great interest in showing the relation between dramatic methods, and building socialism in Nicaragua, and defending the country from attack by the United States.

What was the class nature of the elections in Nicaragua?

It's wrong to talk about bourgeois parliamentary elections, about elections for a bourgeois parliament. My stay in the country fully confirmed my conviction that state power in Nicaragua represents the workers and poor peasants. Some 450,000 armed working people keep their guns in their homes. It is in the context of such a regime that you have to define the class nature of the Assembly, and not on the basis of formal criteria.

How much do the Sandinistas' declarations of support for political pluralism mean?

There is no way to assess individual motivations. It is still harder to make predictions about future changes in attitudes. But one thing is clear — Sandinista leaders are now saying that political pluralism is neither a tactical manoeuvre with regard to the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie nor concession to international public opinion, whether this be directed at social democrats, left Christians, Latin-American bourgeois forces or imperialist countries themselves. They are saying that political pluralism is useful and essential for the revolutionary process, useful and essential for building socialism in Nicaragua. It is, in particular, essential for raising the class consciousness and level of activity of the toiling masses, to get them involved increasingly in the real administration of the economy and the state, in the struggle against bureaucratic deformations within the revolutionary camp and FSLN.

These more and more numerous declarations represent a notable contribution to the development of international revolutionary consciousness, a return to the original thought of Marx, of the Lenin of 1917, of Rosa Luxembourg and of Trotsky. I see it as confirmation of what we have been reiterating for decades.

Inasmuch as these positions are attuned to the reality in Nicaragua, the entire international workers' movement, the entire world working class, will derive immense advantages from them.

Can you give some practical examples of the fruits of political pluralism for the toiling masses?

You can't dissociate political pluralism from the self-organisation and self-management of the masses. One conditions the other. A combination of the two is beginning to take hold in Nicaragua. It is far from having achieved its fullest development. But the fact that things are beginning to move in this direction represents a new step forward, by comparison with workers' self-management in

SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY AND NICARAGUA



Yugoslavia, which has been partially smothered by the single-party system.

With respect to workers' control and mass participation in the management of the enterprises, production committees are operating in more than half the enterprises. The real extent of self-management differs considerably, to be sure, but it is continuing to increase.

With respect to territorial organisation, the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) are the bodies in the neighbourhoods that represent the great mass of the population. They take charge of a series of state functions, such as distributing ration coupons, supervising the distribution of basic necessities and education.

As regards education in the rural areas, there are parents' consultative councils (sometimes including both parents and high school students) that strive in particular to coordinate education and the preparation of high school students for integration into the productive process.

At the same time, vigorous arguments are going on in the press. Every day, *Barricada* and *Nuevo Diario* answer *La Prensa*, exposing the lies and half-truths of the opposition. For example, when *La Prensa* claimed that the government had kept the leaders of the opposition from travelling abroad, *Barricada* published a list of their many trips, based on exit stamps collected at the Managua airport.

Another important fact, if you want to talk about pluralism and democratic rights, is that there are presently strikes going on, and they have not been subjected to any sort of repression.

Are the advances toward socialist democracy going to be reflected in the constitution that the Assembly is going to start drawing up?

I think so, obviously I can't predict to what an extent. That depends on the discussion underway, the extent of the involvement and the political activity of the masses, the outcome of social struggles in the coming months, and above all, the outcome of the confrontation with imperialism and the counterrevolution.

So far, there are two gains that should be pointed up. On the one hand, democratic rights, a pluralism of political parties, the right to strike, and freedom of the press and association seem to have been codified. On the other, the Sandinista leadership has just made an important step forward by recognising the right to

regional autonomy for the Miskito Indian ethnic minority.

The big question left pending is that of the institutionalisation, alongside the National Assembly, of people's power, either in an assembly or in another form — it does not matter what the form is as long as it is real and not purely a formal 'rubber stamp' body.

In other words, people's power should be established not just at the local level, in the neighbourhoods, villages and enterprises but also at the level of municipalities, regions and of the country as a whole.

This rise of socialist democracy is taking place in the context of continual imperialist aggression against the Nicaraguan revolution. Isn't there a contradiction in all this?

Not at all. The Sandinista regime in Nicaragua is facing the cruellest sort of imperialist military and economic offensive. In addition to the lessons drawn from the Nicaraguan revolutionary process itself and the lessons from other countries, this imperialist offensive is a stimulus for the FSLN to seek to continually broaden its popularity among the masses and increase the effective support it gets from them in order to be able to mobilize the entire people should there be a massive American aggression. This orientation has been crowned with success.

I think that against imperialism and its contra mercenaries, the support of the masses for the FSLN is almost total.

You speak of a cruel counterrevolutionary offensive. Could you give some examples?

During my stay in Nicaragua, a gang of 200 counterrevolutionaries staged an ambush outside El Pericon, to the north of the city of Esteli, and massacred 28 workers who were going to pick coffee beans. Most of the victims of the unspeakable slaughter were telecommunications workers. Several of them were burned alive by the counterrevolutionaries, while others were finished off with bayonets. During the funeral, the whole city of Esteli was in the streets shouting its grief and its determination to avenge its brothers and sisters.

What are the counterrevolutionaries trying to gain by such massacres?

The imperialists are perfectly well aware that international public op-

nion is becoming more sensitive every day to the threat of massive aggression, of the US air force bombing Nicaragua or of the Marines invading.

If such crimes were committed, hundreds of thousands of people would protest in the streets, not just in Western Europe but also in Mexico, in Latin America, and in particular in the United States and Canada. Washington would have to pay a very high political price. In fact, it is necessary to make every effort to make this political price higher and higher, to make it too high.

In these conditions, for the moment, the imperialists have chosen a war of attrition as their line of attack against the Nicaraguan revolution. They are combining the incursions of armed gangs of counterrevolutionaries with a growing blockade and economic sabotage.

The gangs are operating basically from Honduras. They have ultra-modern equipment, and sometimes even helicopter support. It is obviously the imperialists who are providing this logistical aid, through the intermediary of the CIA.

Does the counterrevolution have a social base in Nicaragua itself?

You can't talk about civil war in the real meaning of the term, since the social base of the contras is a very narrow one. It is made up essentially of Somoza's old National Guard, their families and their retainers, and the whole thing depends on camps established outside the country. This base is clearly being eroded. They're starting to replace their losses by recruiting mercenaries of other nationalities rather than Nicaraguans.

Is this war of attrition effective from the counterrevolutionary point of view?

It obviously cannot overthrow the Sandinista regime or even undermine it. But it can place the regime in more and more difficult economic circumstances. It has forced the government to devote 35 per cent of the national budget to military spending. Imports of spare parts, raw materials and consumer goods are dropping. What is more, it has caused damage amounting to one-fourth of the national budget.

Moreover, this war of attrition is forcing the people's government to mobilise a great mass of workers continually in the army and the militia, thereby causing grave interruptions in production and in the circulation of goods. The government has to mount a struggle at the same time to defend the country militarily and to bring in the coffee harvest. That is a very heavy burden for the popular masses.

Has the economic situation in Nicaragua deteriorated as a result?

During the first years after the Sandinista victory, the material situation improved for the toiling masses, which is something we have not seen often in the revolutions of the twentieth century. In 1983 Nicaragua had the highest rate of growth in all Latin America.

The year 1984, by contrast, was a difficult one, a year of war economy, as the Sandinista comrades say. War costs and the destruction caused by the aggressors reduced available resources by nearly 15%. The masses understand this and accept it, but that doesn't mean that they suffer any less from its consequences.

Can you specify what is involved in the economic burden imperialist aggression is imposing on the Nicaraguan masses?

The costs of the war involve a reduction in the quantity of goods distributed by the public network. The latter in fact is more and more being restricted to rationed goods (food staples) and essential services (housing, education, health, public transport — which, moreover, is inadequate — and water, gas and electricity, where there are also problems).

The wages of blue- and white-collar workers are ample for paying for these goods and services. But they are not sufficient to enable them to get what they need on the free market in dollars (the dollar goes for 20 times the official rate on the black market), more and more commodities are flowing into the free market, putting clothing, toys and electrical appliances, in particular, out of the reach of those that have no other means than their wages.



Except for some products, there is no real scarcity. There is, however, an imbalance between prices and incomes. And that's producing an economic reaction on the part of the masses. More and more people, including workers and members of their households, are preferring to take up intermediary jobs. In this way, they can earn four or five times more than they could working in a factory or a cooperative. Unemployment has completely disappeared. There is a shortage of labour.

Does that represent the failure of the mixed economy?

It's more complicated than that. When people talk about the mixed economy, they are generally thinking of what remains of capitalist enterprise in the strict sense in Nicaragua. That is not where the main problems come from, because the production and exports of this sector are strictly monitored by the state (the situation is comparable to that of the NEP in Russia).

The difficulties arise from the uneasy coexistence of a nationalised industrial sector that is too weak to provide for the entire population and a sector of small peasant producers that cannot be eliminated by forced collectivisation.

For political and social reasons, as well as economic ones, it is essential to maintain the alliance between the workers and the peasants. But it is necessary to make sure that this uneasy coexistence of the two sectors does not lead to imposing sacrifices on the workers, and blocking planning, industrialisation and a reasonable degree of economic growth.

THE DEVELOPING split in the Communist Party has opened up a decisive fight over the future of the Labour left. The *Morning Star* is attempting to forge close links with the 'Bennite' left of the Labour Party. JOHN ROSS looks at the stakes involved.

THE development of the Labour left around Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and Arthur Scargill is the most positive development in British politics for 60 years. The first truly mass class struggle socialist development since the defeat of the General Strike and the Stalinisation of the Communist Party.

The reasons for the mass support of this current are not simply that it increasingly bases itself on militant class struggle but that it addresses itself implicitly and explicitly to the most important question for a strategy of building popular support for socialism — *the question of the relation of socialism and democracy*.

There should be no misunderstanding of the fundamental importance of this for any socialist strategy. The idea that the working classes of states such as Britain, the United States, or the rest of Western Europe will abandon capitalism for a society which is actually *less* democratic than the 'parliamentary democracy' they enjoy at present is an ultra-left delusion. The idea that a modern economy can be run on the model of East European, Bulgarian or Soviet style planning is equally an illusion. *Socialism in Western Europe will either be democratic or it will not exist at all*.

It is in this relation of socialism and democracy also that the truly gigantic counter-revolutionary impact of Stalinism can be assessed. This role is *not* simply, or in many cases even primarily, a question of the local Communist Party. The idea that the CPGB, with its 17,000 members, is a fundamental obstacle to the overthrow of British capitalism is ridiculous. The responsibility in that field lies overwhelmingly with the labour bureaucracy.

Stalinism

But the *international* impact of Stalinism is colossal in its counter-revolutionary effect, quite regardless of how strong its local Communist Party is. The great majority of the working class of the world know perfectly well the reality of Eastern Europe. They know the suppression of democracy, the enormous limitations on the right of expression and organisation of the working class, the continual series of risings and struggles by the East European workers against the bureaucracy — East Berlin in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Poland throughout the 1970s and early 1980s.

Sections of the working class also know the enormous material achievements of the USSR and its role in the defeat of fascism. They also, in many cases, have few illusions in the role of imperialism and capitalism.

But the effect of Stalinism, at best, is to irrevocably divide the working class — and therefore secure the victory of imperialism. The clearest example of this, one which shows the real situation of the working class in the imperialist countries, was seen in Portugal in 1975.

Portugal in 1975 was the one country in Europe, since the aftermath of World War II, in which the elements of a truly pre-revolutionary crisis and direct struggle for socialism existed. In Lenin's famous words not merely were the working class and oppressed unwilling to go on in the old way but the ruling class was unable to go on in the old way.

The Portuguese army had been defeated in the wars in Africa. The economy was drained by the effort of the war. The ruling class was discredited. By the summer of 1975 huge splits had developed in the armed forces together with rising self-organisation of the working class and soldiers. In short the *material* conditions to overthrow capitalism in Portugal were beginning to develop — although the development of revolu-



Soviet tanks crush Hungarian revolution, 1956

tional socialist organisation was completely inadequate to actually establish a socialist society.

The degree of decomposition and chaos of the state apparatus in Portugal was *qualitatively* more advanced than anything seen in Europe since the end of World War II. While in France in 1968, Italy in 1969, and Spain in 1970-76 tremendous working class struggles developed, in no case did an equivalent qualitative split develop within the ruling class or state apparatus to that which existed in Portugal. Portugal was the *one* case in the imperialist countries of Western Europe where both elements of a revolutionary crisis developed.

The way the Portuguese ruling class intervened into the crisis which confronted it, in order to maintain its rule, was clear. The Portuguese ruling classes' repressive apparatus was useless in the situation — no coercion by the state played a fundamental role in maintaining capitalist rule. The ruling class intervened politically to shatter the unity of the working class along the line of divide introduced by the Socialist Party bureaucracy on the one side, and the Communist Party on the other.

The Communist Party — and in Portugal it was a particularly Stalinised one — proclaimed the virtues of Soviet, East European, Bulgarian style socialism. The Socialist Party proclaimed that the sole possible model of democracy was capitalist parliamentary democracy.

Caught between a concept of socialism which excluded all democracy on the one hand, and a model of 'democracy' which excluded any attack on capitalism on the other, the Portuguese working class was completely split. Reactionary demonstrations by the Socialist Party on the one side, and militant but incoherent and ineffectual mobilisations by the 'far left' and Communist Party on the other, raged throughout the summer of 1975.

In this situation of hopeless split in the working class the Portuguese capitalist class inevitably emerged triumphant — this being accomplished by the small scale mopping-up operations of 25 November 1975. 'Order' was restored in Portugal.

Split

Of course in countries other than Portugal the split would not even have reached the point of summer 1975. Portugal was the weakest link in the West European imperialist chain. It had the oldest dictatorship, probably the weakest ruling class. Ruling class credibility had been smashed by colonial wars fought in defence of an empire which Portugal had clung to too long precisely because it was weak.

Under these circumstances a Stalinist Communist Party had far greater support than in any other West European country. Portugal is, together with Greece, the one country in Western Europe where an old-style

pro-Moscow Communist Party dominates the *organisation* of the working class in a fundamentally unchallenged way.

In France the pro-Moscow Communist Party is now easily surpassed by the Socialist Party on the electoral field and challenged, since 1968, in the trade unions. In Spain the Communist Party has both split and declined from being the chief political party of the working class for 40 years to a situation where it is politically overshadowed by the Socialist Party.

In Italy the Communist Party remains dominant but only by distancing itself radically from Moscow and to a degree, increasingly occupying the space that a social democratic party would take. Portugal therefore actually exaggerated the size of that section of the working class which could be pulled behind a Moscow-style road to socialism. In most West European countries the division of the working class would be in a far less favourable relation of forces against capitalism than in Portugal.

The international impact of Stalinism, of the bureaucratic system in Eastern Europe, has been to give an extra, and totally undeserved, boost for the social democratic bureaucracies.

From Portugal however can be seen with absolute clarity the *strategic* problem of winning socialism in Western Europe. This is to build a left which is simultaneous democratic and socialist — or rather to fuse the two in the higher form of socialist democracy. That is the only way to

break down the barriers both of the pro-capitalist socialist parties and the impact of the Stalinist communist parties.

In this framework can be seen just how vital is the emergence of the 'Benn-Scargill-Livingstone' new Labour left in Britain. The historical blockage represented by pro-capitalist democracy in Western Europe, combined with socialist deformation in Eastern Europe, can only be broken down by a combined *international* process.

The first element in overcoming the blockage represented by the bureaucracy is showing how the so-called 'democracy' of Western Europe rests on *imperialist* foundations — and drawing all the practical conclusions from this. That the democracy of Western Europe and the United States is propped up by the exploitation of literally thousands of millions on a world scale. That the foundations of *capitalist* democracy in Western Europe and the United States is unbelievable barbarities such as the US war in Vietnam, its war against Nicaragua, and the existence of regimes such as that of South Africa and Israel. A struggle for socialist democracy in Western Europe is first and foremost a struggle against imperialism.

Secondly the blockage which exists to democratic socialism-socialist democracy in Western Europe is intrinsically bound up with the struggle in Eastern Europe. It is events such as the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the 'Prague Spring' of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, the development of *Solidarnosc* in Poland, that help break up the Stalinist monolith in Eastern Europe.

The struggle in Western Europe must not only be an international but also a specifically European one. The social revolution against capitalism in Western Europe is intimately tied up with political revolution against the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe.

That is the concretisation today of the famous, and correct, slogan of the 'United Socialist States of Europe'.

Revolution

Finally this perspective means developing a socialist and democratic left in Western Europe. One that is 100 per cent committed to the struggle against imperialism, 100 per cent committed to the struggle against capitalism in the imperialist countries, and 100 per cent on the side of socialist struggle against the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe — and precisely out of this, one that puts forward an authentically socialist democratic position for Western Europe.

The importance of forces around the 'Benn-Scargill-Livingstone' left in Britain is that they are part of such a developing left. The positions of Tony Benn on Ireland, or Arthur Scargill on Cuba and Central America, or Ken Livingstone on a whole series of issues do begin to raise the possibility of such a left — and many of their supporters in the base of the labour movement of course go much further. All this is despite many weaknesses — of which Tony Benn's refusal to come out against NATO and Arthur Scargill's wrong positions on Solidarnosc are well known examples.

This is a current, furthermore, with deep historical roots in the struggle of the British working class for trade union liberties, civil rights, democracy in local government and a whole series of other issues. In short it roots itself objectively in a defence of what Trotsky called 'the nuclei of proletarian democracy within capitalist society'. Both from the point of view of its international orientation and its domestic policies the Benn-Scargill-Livingstone left of the Labour Party is the most advanced mass working class current in Western Europe outside of Sinn Fein in Ireland.

For that current to be influenced by, or deflected by, Stalinism would be an historical catastrophe for the British working class movement. That is the stakes of what is developing in the fight over the future of the Labour left.



Ed Hall at Special Conference

Labour's leaders must fight

MANY SPEAKERS at the London Labour Party special conference on rate-capping referred to the London Bridge campaign, and to past attempts to set up shop stewards committees across the boroughs.

We were particularly pleased at Ken Livingstone's speech in favour of London Bridge. He pointed out the seriousness of the concerted attack which is being mounted on local government democracy and that it was unrealistic to believe that individual trade unions can win on their own.

There's got to be some link between the unions, and that link has got to extend to the users of the local authority services.

London Bridge took a lot of debate at the special conference. Keithness, who proposed the London Bridge amendment to the executive agreement on behalf of ISLG, pointed out that it didn't matter how good a speech he made — because he understood that the motion block vote was going to move against it. He was right. The amendment was carried on a show of hands, but lost when a card vote was called.

Tommy Duras for example, a regional organiser for TGWU, spoke in the debate saying that he was wholly in favour of London Bridge and that the TGWU would use its block vote against the amendment.

The individual unions already have facility agreements with local authorities. It was unacceptable for them to have solutions put forward which put joint shop stewards' committees in a more advantageous position.

Perhaps it was a tap on the shoulder to shop stewards: 'be careful we pull this vote out any time we wish'. Given the success and high profile of the campaign, it's not surprising the unions are having a careful look at it.

At the previous day's local government committee of the TUC, the chair Fred Jarvis (TUC general secretary) and the galaxy of trade union bosses there were doing the same thing.

We were talking about the March TUC demonstration. We had written saying we weren't all that keen on one-day actions. He told us that the TUC could listen to the rank and file, but through the

It will greatly weaken the campaign to take that position and not have the support of the NEC. The negotiations with Patrick Jenkin will attempt to tear the guts out of the local government legislation and stress the need to bring back the element of local democracy.

Support

If they are not successful, it is essential that the Labour leadership support those boroughs taking action. Let's face it, that's what the public look for. They look for intelligent and effective grass roots activity, but they also look for the rubber stamp of the leadership.

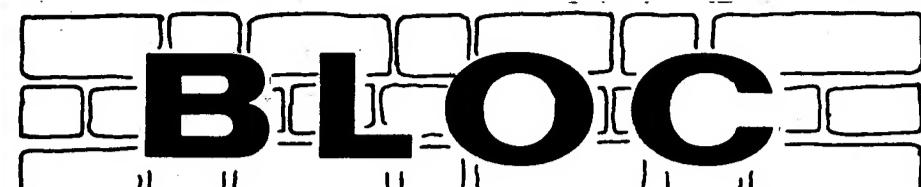
If the leadership doesn't even fulfil that function — let alone actually pulling people out in an inspirational way — if it doesn't rubber stamp the policies that have been worked out through months and months of discussion, I think that's very poor leadership indeed.

No amount of sidestepping will camouflage that fact. You can point to recent months when the leadership hasn't gone out there in the cold and supported people: Liverpool, the miners' strike.

We're talking about a million white-collar workers and two million blue-collar workers in local government, the majority of whom are affiliated to or individual members of the Labour Party. Neil Kinnock owes it to them to give them a lead when their jobs and the services they provide are on the line.

If a law says that a whole section of public employees have got to go on the dole, you've got to take a close look at that law. Is it simply a civil or criminal matter, or is it a straight-forward fight against people being unemployed?

When it's the latter stepping outside the law is an obvious conclusion. Fancy words can never disguise that. There is no will on the part of the popular press to pick this up, it's the job of Labour leaders to force it home.



second conference

THE SECOND NATIONAL Broad Left Organising Committee conference will be held in Manchester Free Trade Hall on 23 March. The two main items on the agenda will be the anti-union laws and the defence of local government jobs, services and democracy.

Last year's conference was attended by 2700 delegates and visitors. This year's can be expected to attract a similar number.

It will be important for socialists to mobilise for this conference, despite the experience of last year. Then the conference was more of a rally around Militant's political positions than a forum for debating the way forward for the left in the unions and in the Labour Party.

This year, the experience of the miners' strike must be central to the discussions. The need to construct a left in the movement to deal with the present leadership of the Labour Party and TUC

has been demonstrated in the past year. We have seen too the kind of forces which are essential to this task.

Among those who rallied to the aid of the miners and identified with the struggle were the most oppressed sections of society: women, blacks, Irish people. At Labour Party conference this was shown in the support given by the NUM to the demands of those sections of society.

Applications for credentials to: BLOC, c/o George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6E8. Each national broad left trade union organisation can send up to four delegates, at £3 each.

tion in the party and the trade unions. It will be built by drawing those sections of society which the labour movement has ignored for so long into the battle.

The organisers of the conference, mainly *Militant*, will seek to prevent discussion on these issues. However, all those who see the need for an open, democratic left — one which can draw in all sections of the oppressed and link the fight in the Labour Party with the fight in the unions — should mobilise to ensure that the 1985 BLOC conference does not repeat its 1984 mistakes.

Applications for credentials to: BLOC, c/o George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place, London E9 6E8. Each national broad left trade union organisation can send up to four delegates, at £3 each.

GLC deputy leader says

'Scrap the PTA'

THE growing campaign against the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) was given an added boost this week with the call by John McDonnell, GLC deputy leader, for its immediate repeal.

The racist and blatantly political nature of the Act was exposed with the arrests in Liverpool over Christmas. The Act has consistently failed in its stated aim — to prevent 'terrorism'.

Instead it has been used as a form of institutionalised racism against the Irish. A GLC study has shown up serious violations of civil rights and a basic disregard for human dignity.

John McDonnell's statement has been prompted by the recent arrests of Dr Moira O'Shea and Peter Lynch — two of those arrested in Liverpool. He points out that though the case is 'sub judice' it's clear that Dr O'Shea openly decided immediately to return to England when she heard of the Special Branch raid on her home in Birmingham and Lynch's arrest.

In contrast, the police operation has been highly secretive: the most alarming example being the wrecking of Dr O'Shea's daughter's flat by the Special Branch after she publicly expressed concern for her mother's safety. Of the 5850 detained

under the PTA since its introduction in November 1984, only 143 have actually been charged. Worse still people can be held for up to 10 months awaiting trial regardless of their age, sex or state of health.

As John McDonnell says: 'the Act does not prevent terrorism — it enshrines racism against the Irish in British law'.

It is becoming clearer daily that the real meaning behind the PTA was for the Special Branch to keep a close watch on the whole Irish community in Britain. All socialists and those concerned with defence of basic civil liberties should add their voice to the growing campaign against the racist PTA.



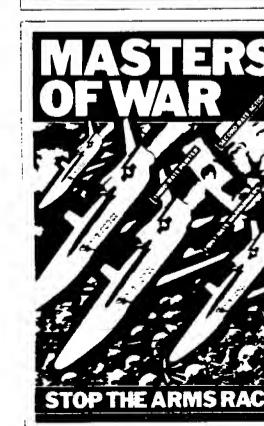
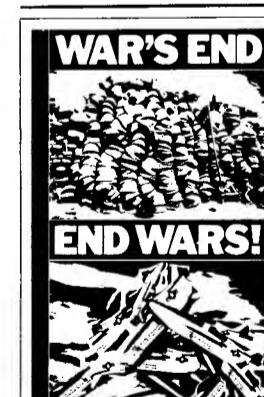
to discuss the GLC's budget proposals

WHOSE LONDON IS IT ANYWAY? YOURS!

Saturday 23 February 10am-5pm

The Wembley Conference Centre
Empire Way, Wembley, Middlesex

more information: phone 01-633 4400



Set of four anti-war posters in a limited edition, designed by David King, 620mm by 410mm in two colours on art paper. A bargain at £2 per set, or 60p each. Bulk for 10 sets or more. Order from: Cardinal Enterprises, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP; or phone 01-359 8288 for details.

Kinnock's 'loyalty oath'

TWO ATTEMPTS to witch-hunt *Militant* supporters came to a head last week. In Rhondda, the expulsion of Brychan Davies was upheld by his constituency party, after being referred back by the national executive, while in Gillingham moves to suspend David Turner and Tony Baker for defying a ban on the sales of *Militant* were kicked out by the general committee.

A third person — Mary Turner — who, though not a *Militant* supporter, participated in a 'protest sale' — was also reprimanded.

Rhondda is the most worrying witch-hunt for the left, not only because a small general committee voted through an expulsion against the original advice of the NEC, but also because the vote on the NEC to expel Brychan was lost by only one — that of Neil Kinnock.

The lesson from this is that the present NEC is a witch-hunting one. A fact recently confirmed by Kinnock's statements on the *Weekend World* programme: that the whole of *Militant* should be expelled, the only problem being that expulsions could only take place under the present rules when membership of another organisation had been proved.

Statements like this show the importance of Kinnock's attempt to introduce a 'loyalty clause' based on the absolute sanctity of parliamentary democracy.

The idea of expelling the whole of *Militant* on political grounds was also central to the right's case in Gillingham. 'Revolutionaries,' it was said, 'should go and set up their

own party'. It was clear that the suspensions were proposed as a hardening-out process in preparation for future expulsions.

By Les Hartop and Carol Turner

The witch-hunt is just one piece of Neil Kinnock's jigsaw, albeit an important one. It forms part of his plans to sanitise the party — to dissociate it from the class struggle, to



base it on the lowest common denominator of opinion poll politics, and to appeal to the 'middle ground' in the hope of winning the next election.

If Kinnock is to succeed in this, he must

silence the left wing and try to convince the ruling class that Labour really is safe in government — safe, that is, from the point of view of their interests.

There is a Catch-22 of course: the more he pushes through this project, the more the average voter will rightly believe that Labour is just another political party no different than the rest.

The real salvation for the party lies not along the road of Neil Kinnock's witch-hunts but that taken by the thousands of party members up and down the country whose magnificent support for the miners' strike has shown that Labour has within its ranks the elements of a genuine class-struggle wing.

It is that wing of the party that wants to lead Labour into the next election campaigning for socialist policies that make a difference to the lives of ordinary people.

Photo: JOHN HARRIS



John Golding: architect of past witch-hunts

Political levy campaign

THE LABOUR Coordinating Committee this week called on the Labour Party leadership to throw its full weight behind a campaign in defence of the political levy.

In a letter to Jim Mortimer, national secretary of the party, Peter Hain pointed out that the very viability of the party is under threat from the '84 Act.

The LCC calls on the NEC to adopt specific

By Graham Topley

policies and to make sure that the party implements

them. The letter stresses the important role that Labour can have in convincing trade unionists to support the political levy.

The letter calls for a campaign based on democracy, which it argues is the best way to avoid falling into the trap of 'sectional self-interest'.

All these proposals are designed to rebuild and maintain the links between Labour and the trade unions, weakened as they have been by successive Tory attacks. Hain calls for a national information campaign organised by the party, and for an education campaign at local and national level on the Act's implications and how best to campaign for a 'yes' vote in the workplaces.

win the next election he believes without two years of preparation.

The Labour Party now must go on the offensive and fight for its policies clearly and unambiguously. The miners' strike has shown that only a mass, campaigning Labour Party fighting for the interests of the working class can hope to succeed.

In the 'long haul' to the next election, the political levy campaign gives Labour an excellent opportunity to put its case at the workplace, in a way it has never previously done. This campaign should be at the centre of the type of policies Labour must fight on now.

In this framework, local parties should be turning out, making and strengthening links with trade unionists at every level — including increasing affiliations and the active involvement of trade unionists in local parties.

Joint trade union-Labour Party action is the way to defeat the Tories' attacks on the levy and promote Labour as an organisation fighting for the interests of the working class.

Campaign

At the last election, 11 per cent more women manual workers than men voted Labour — and any campaign should be aimed at women in particular.

Lastly Hain called for the reorganisation of the Labour Party's campaigning methods in general, to win support for its policies. Labour cannot

Labour CND Annual Meeting

Saturday 20 April • 10 am till 5 pm
County Hall, London SE1

Afternoon workshops with members of the Parliamentary Labour Party defence team

voting entitlement:
(all organisations must be affiliated to CND nationally)

constituencies — 5 delegates
branch parties — 2 delegates

All delegates must be fully paid up members of the Labour Party and of national CND

Please try and let LCND know your delegates by 12 April

Resolutions must be in by 30 March

more information from:
Kate Edwards, Secretary LCND, c/o BBC, 2 Eaton Gate, London SW1



Conference against cruise

THE ANTI-CRUISE conference in Manchester town hall on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 March, organised by Manchester Cruise Action Group, has already attracted a lot of support.

It will be a working conference for activists in CND and the peace movement to discuss how to organise nationally and in-

ternationally to get rid of US ground-launched cruise missiles. It will provide a forum for open discussion and exchange of ideas, as well as establishing an efficient network of cruise activists.

Finally, it will provide an important focus for plans for active resistance to the missiles in 1985.

This is the first national conference against

cruise, and it is vital that as many peace groups up and down the country are represented.

Final registration date is 1 March — but the earlier you register, the surer is your place. Do it now!

● For more details, contact: Conference Against Cruise, CND Office, 61 Bloom Street, Manchester M1 3LY.

Regrettably no rates rises has not yet been placed alongside other demands, and doesn't feature in any resolution at Perth. Such a line, insisting government make up deficits on socially necessary spending, is the only way to maximise unity against government and avoid exacerbating the sort of split it's child play for government to create if increasing rates are posed as the only way to maintain services. Hopefully Perth will begin to organise a real united Scottish fightback co-ordinated by Labour councils.

It's unfortunate, or perhaps deliberate, that the agenda separates the issue of abortion from the 6 in the section on women's rights, placing the one resolution on the subject beside 15 on the Health Service. Hopefully this doesn't presage an executive attempt to avoid substantial debate on Aberdeen Labour Women's Council's (91) that reaffirms support for a free comprehensive abortion service available on request through the NHS and deplores the fact that wasn't part of the 1983 election manifesto.

There are nine resolutions on defence. Most of these call for resistance to civil defence and promotion of alternative employment. The only comprehensive reaffirmation of unilateralism is from Springburn (114).

Unfortunately it doesn't deal with key questions like how far this sits beside the NEC document passed overwhelmingly at Blackpool last year or how to mobilise the party in support of the disarmament campaign. Labour CND hopes to deal with the first question at its fringe meeting, Friday 8 March 7.30, which will take the form of a discussion between signatories of that document — Robin Cook and George Robertson — and opponents — John Maxton and Willie McIver.

Social ACTION



Money moves us!

Y THE time you are reading this, work will have started on the new premises.

And that means we now urgently need cash. This week we have to pay for plaster board, timber, plumbing accessories, electrical work etc. We also have to hire a crane so that our printing equipment can be got into the building.

Then on top of that we have to hire plant for all the work that is being done on the site. That is only half the story. We are buying a new camera, a videotape, a new and really up-to-date typesetting machine, and that little lot will cost another £7000 in deposits.

Date: / / 198

To
(Name of your own bank in capitals)

of
(address of your bank in capitals, and sorting code)

Please pay to the credit of IRG Development Fund No. 21255355 at Barclays Bank 20-16-87, Caledonian Rd., London N1. Starting on / / (date of first payment) and thereafter monthly until further notice. Debit my account no for the amount of £.....

Address

Signature

When completed and signed please return to: IRG Development Fund, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP.

SUBSCRIBE

Special free book offer!

Take out a years inland subscription and we will send you *free* one of these books:

Thatcher and Friends by John Ross or

Over our Dead Bodies — Women Against the Bomb

Introductory offer for new readers: Eight issues for just £2!

Send me as special offer

Enclose a cheque P.O. payable to Socialist Action for £

328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP

US ANTI-ABORTIONISTS

Pro-life equals pro-violence

TWELVE YEARS AFTER the historic decision by the US supreme court making abortion legal, the anti-abortion movement in America, frustrated in its desire to turn the clock back by constitutional means, is increasingly turning to violence.

The bombing of abortion clinics, threats of violence to clinic staff, and harassment of clients are tactics used across the country. Clinic workers have to contend with constant threats of bombs and arson. And the 'sidewalk counselling' of clients is so intense that some clinics have installed special counsellors to help women get over the experience.

This intimidation has put a few women off; others have had 3am phone calls of a baby crying and a voice saying: 'Mommy, mommy — why did you murder me?' abortion illegal they're going to make it impossible.'

By Leonora Lloyd

The official anti-abortion groups admit responsibility for the pavement harassments but not for the violence. But the pattern is always the same: the 'sidewalk counsellors' disappear shortly before any bombing. So presumably even if not directly responsible they know when an attack may be due.

Eve Paul of Planned Parenthood says that the leaders of the anti-abortion organisations have not spoken out against the violence, that this is tacit encouragement and is true of many American national leaders too.

The Bureau thinks that the attackers are acting alone and that the groups around the country calling themselves 'The Army of God', who have claimed responsibility for a number of attacks, are not an organised group.

The attacks began after numerous attempts to get 'human life' amendments made law failed, and polls showed that at least 75 per cent of Americans support some form of legalised abortion. Alice Wilson of the Committee to Defend Reproductive Rights puts it: 'If they can't make

Fundamentalist preacher Jerry Falwell has said that they are against the

violence and that the perpetrators should be treated as criminals but: 'this reckless law is spawning in deranged minds that kind of action ... the problem is not going to be solved until we give rights back to the unborn.'

Meantime the rights of women and clinic workers are being viciously attacked. Clinics and pro-choice groups are setting up their own defence squads and hiring detectives to find the bombers.

William Bond who runs three clinics in the mid-West says: 'This is war — there is no other way you can call it!'

Anti-abortionists say that they are obeying a higher law and that is the law of necessity. After the arrests of two bombers responsible for three Christmas day attacks, the girl-friend of one said that God had told them to attack clinics: it had been done on Christmas morning as a gift to Jesus.

Vicious

One of the most vicious groups is called 'Women Exploited by Abortion', whose high opinion of women is shown in their literature: '... ambiguity, fear, shock, vulnerability, and an inability to think are normal parts of early pregnancy.' But if women are victims of their hormones then it is not just choice of motherhood that you deny them but the right to make any meaningful decisions or indeed play a full part in society.

The tactics and the propaganda now being adopted by the anti-abortion movement in America show just how anti-women they are. Much of the propaganda used in the States is found in Britain.

The latest example is *The Silent Scream*, a film featuring an eight-minute abortion as seen by a scanner, and shots of buckets of fetuses. It has been denounced even by anti-abortion doctors as showing a highly distorted view of abortion, made more so by the emotive commentary.

For example although the woman was anaesthetised during the operation the fetus is shown to 'struggle violently against the threat it perceives'. But doctors say that once the woman is anaesthetised the fetus doesn't move.

The fetus is claimed to be 12 weeks old. But a group of doctors shown the film by ITV claimed it was almost certainly older. As a result ITV decided not to screen it, and Lord Thompson, chair of the IBA said: '... no one in this country of medical eminence ... was prepared to accept that the film formed the basis for a proper discussion of the moral, psychological and medical issues of abortion.'

Despite this it is clear that Catholic and SPUC groups throughout the country are already using the film, showed that in their determination to deny women's rights any propaganda will do however inaccurate.



Ten Years of Fighting for Abortion Rights for All Women

In February this year the National Abortion Campaign will be celebrating 10 years of fighting back against the anti-abortionists and for women's abortion rights. Events and activities throughout Britain are planned, including:

- National Rally and Demonstration in Glasgow, 16 February
- West Midlands Conference in Birmingham on 9 February
- Meeting with Jo Richardson MP at the House of Commons in London on 4 March

More information contact: NAC, Wesley House, 70 Great Queens Street, London WC2B 5AX

